I interviewed Mrs. Docia J. Jacobs, Supervisor at the New Horizon School, which is operated by the Beaver Valley Intermediate Unit and is part of the fifteen local school districts of Beaver County. New Horizon school is a school for special individuals to provide them the opportunity to develop their full potential: intellectually, socially, emotionally, physically and vocationally. They serve learning support classes, life skills classes and multi-disabled support classes.

**Staff Hiring**

The staff is composed of experienced professionals and teacher aides. In addition, they employ physical therapists, occupational therapists and speech pathologists. The staff hiring begins with the in-house posting of a job for two weeks. Mrs. Jacobs mentioned that she likes to give existing staff first chance. When jobs are posted outside, she stressed that she likes to give her substitutes first chance because she knows their classroom performance. After reviewing resumes, the interview is conducted by Mrs. Jacobs, Special Ed. Supervisor; Dr. Robert Italia, Special Ed Director at the Intermediate Unit and Mrs. Lori Murtha, Special Ed Supervisor at the Intermediate Unit. After the business part of the interview, Mrs. Jacobs and Mrs. Murtha provide scenarios to see how the interviewee responds. Another technique that has been used is the “Now Interview Me” technique. The interviewee is asked to do the interviewing. A great deal can be learned about topics of importance. Next is a tour of the building and Mrs. Jacobs watches how the interviewee reacts to students and rapport with other teachers and aides. In addition, time is spent reviewing the non-required portfolios. Lastly, they close with a question and answer session.

**Staff Assignments**

Mrs. Jacobs has a wide variety of student ages (5-21) and disabilities to consider when handling staff assignments. She concentrates on assigning students to staff while considering their age, academics, social interactions, interests and the success of the teacher-student assignment previously. Moreover, matching the student’s learning style with teacher style is a key consideration. While paying close attention to meeting state mandated student-teacher ratios, she will switch around students until they are in a comfortable learning environment. When assigning staff, she also looks at seniority; most new teachers will begin with a multi-disability class. In addition, she has the task of assigning music, home-economics, gym, vocational preparation and swimming staff along with numerous therapists and a full time nurse.

**Scheduling**

Scheduling is a major task for Mrs. Jacobs. The schedule is completely child centered and takes into account ages and skill levels for specials. She not only has to create a master schedule but also a Beaver County Rehabilitation schedule, a bus duty schedule, IEP schedule and staff meetings. The trick is to be able to mesh together the master schedule and the School to Work program through the Beaver County Rehabilitation.

Mrs. Jacobs stated that her saving grace was her predecessor providing her with a template to use as a starting point.

The set up and organization of the school is very impressive. At this time, I do not have any recommendations; however, I was very pleased to see that they give top consideration to their substitutes for job openings. Mrs. Jacobs seems to have everything down to a science and has a huge task of looking at each individual child and deciding where to place the child to maximize instruction and improve student achievement.